

# Magazine Feature Section

## HAMMERING OUT A TITLE with KNOCK OUTS

Benny Leonard, a Clean Fighter Who Calls His Mother by Long Distance Telephone After Each Battle Away from Home, Always Seeks to Land a Sleep-Producing Punch and Wants His Opponent to Do the Same.

BY GLEN L. WALLAR.

OF the multitude arises the exception. For the past decade the old-time followers of the boxing game have been bemoaning the fact that the present-day aggregation of fight experts have been gaining fame and fortune without hardly as much as blackening the eyes of the opposition, whereas, in the days of a generation ago, a boxer would hardly be recognized, let alone idolized, unless

tion of producing the boxer who stands out in the fight world as the Statue of Liberty does to an American who has been tied up on the other side of the ocean for several months. He is the lad who is hammering his way to a title by the knock-out route—a boy who, at this writing, has put ten of his opponents of the last year to the mat for the count, and every one of his victims has been recognized as championship timber.

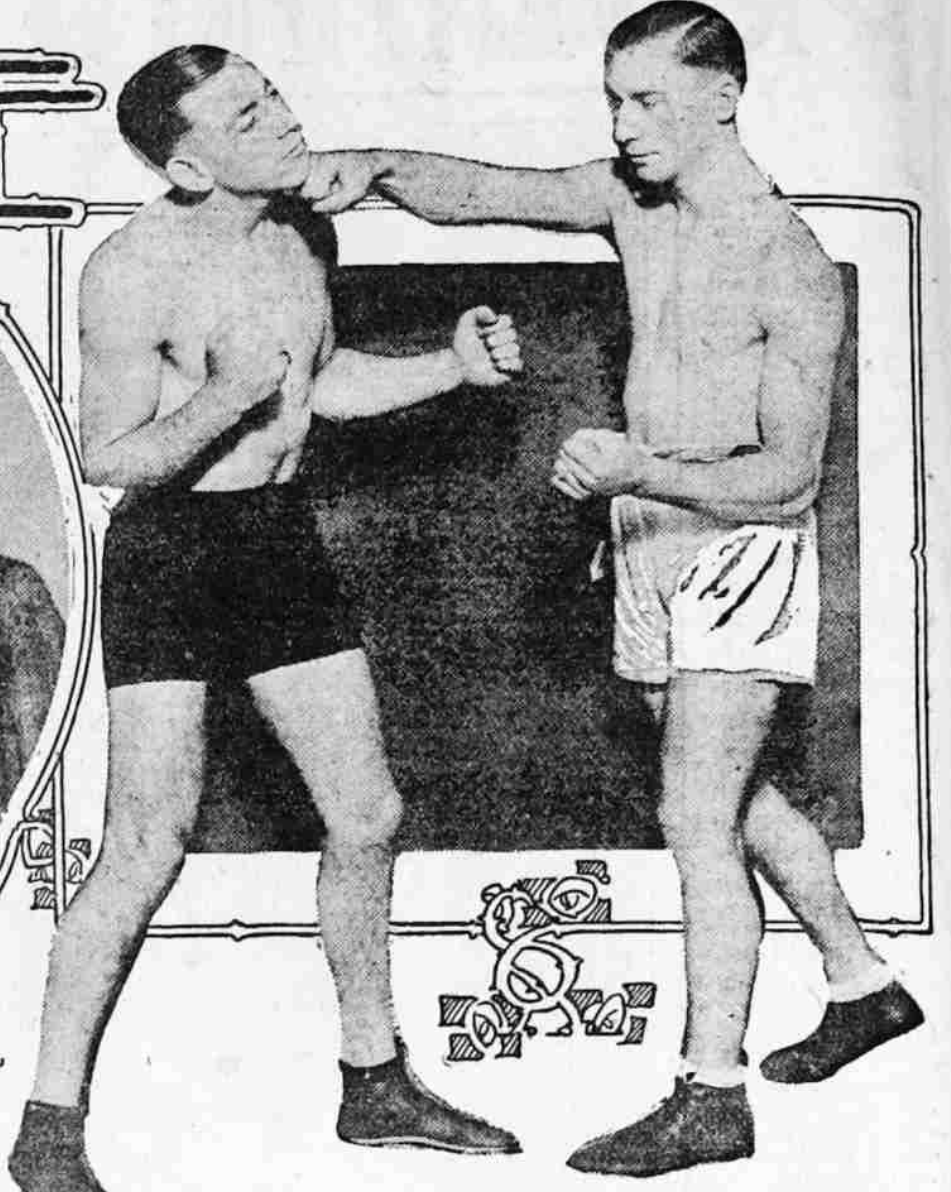
His name is Benjamin Leiner, known to the boxing fraternity as Benny Leonard, the change in name being an accident instead of a desire, due to a mistake of an announcer on Benny's first out before a regular organized club. Pete Prunty, one of the best known announcers in the East, was the man who gave Benny the name of Leonard, not getting the little fellow's pronunciation of Leiner on asking him who he was. The papers carried the name of Leonard, and as he had been successful, the boy and Billy Gibson, now his manager, but at that time only his friend, decided that it would be well for Benny to hang onto his new cognomen.

Not Yet of Age.

ALTHOUGH today one of the most prominent boxers in the country, Leonard is still a kid. He will not be of age until April 7, and is just as fond of his boyish pranks as any lad in his teens. Even when in the ring facing a dangerous opponent it is a hard matter for Benny to remain serious during the entire contest, although it must be said that he is never careless and is one of the most careful trainers the ring has today. His dissipation is of minor importance, he never using intoxicants or narcotics. He is also very careful as to his diet, whether he is in actual training or not.



BILLY GIBSON,  
MANAGER



Benny connecting with his famous right to point of jaw—the knock-out punch.

Kansas was on the mat taking the count when the bell rang, ending the bout. Benny is one of a family of ten. He has four brothers and three sisters. His father and mother are living. He is a great mamma's boy. When away from home he writes her every day and immediately after each match he calls her upon long distance telephone to assure her that he is all right. Since gaining prominence, Leonard is quite a social favorite when at home and attends quite a number of functions, especially church affairs. He insists upon his mother accompanying him to all these events, and she is the guest of honor.

Has Fighting Blood.

BENNY is somewhat polyglot, as to nationality. Of course, he is an American, being born in New York, but his mother is a German, was born in Berlin, Germany, while his father is a Hebrew, and first saw the light of this world in Austria-Hungary. It matters little to the little fighter of what blood he is, as it is America first and all the time for him, and he has good friends of many lands. Billy Gibson, his manager, is Irish, and Benny says he never had a truer friend than Billy.

One thing certain, the blood in Benny was and is of a fighting nature, as the little fellow began wielding his fists while quite a youngster. As a kid Leonard whipped all of the boys around his age in the block in which he lived, and was known as the Ninth Street King Bee. Of course, each block had its champion, and as is the custom in the poorer neighborhoods of a big city so-called social clubs would get the champions of the different blocks to battle in the back yards.

Leonard's first out against a champion of another block came when he was 12 years old, his opponent being Joe Fogarty. The lookers-on collected a purse of 50 cents, of which Benny was given 30, he being declared the winner of the bout. This was his first money gained with the padded mitts, rather insignificant in comparison to his end of the \$30,000 house which witnessed his first bout with Freddie Welsh this year.

For the next couple of years Benny boxed around these little clubs without any serious thought as to the future. He really was too young to give it much consideration. His parents were very much opposed to the fighting spirit of their son, and reprimanded him every time they suspected that he had been wearing the gloves. His mother, especially, was set against him boxing. A purse of \$20, his first amount of what looked like big money to him then, had much to do with overcoming the prejudice his father had against him boxing. After a severe call down and obtaining an acknowledgment that he had been boxing the father asked Benny how much money he got. The little fellow stammered "dad" by handing over a twenty-dollar bill. Mother was given the money with instructions by father to be sure and keep tab on when Benny fought again.

When Benny Was "Fired."

DESPITE his success Mrs. Leiner was still very much opposed to her son becoming a fighter. She could not see her Benny becoming a great man if he followed that vocation and in addition she was so afraid he would get hurt. Unable to persuade him to discard the mitts despite his affection for her, she pursued different tactics. She went to his boss at the printing shop and arranged a scheme to scare the little fellow into submission.

The plan was that the boss would get hold of Benny the following day after he had been in a fight and dismiss him. Then the mother was to take the boy back and regain his job on the promise that Benny would never fight any more. But the two older heads were given a rude shock. The little boxer had wanted to quit for sometime, but hesitated on account of his mother. On being "fired" though, he was perfectly contented and he could not be coaxed back on the job. He immediately went to his newly-made friend, Billy Gibson, and told the manager that he wanted to fight at every opportunity. It was then that Gibson took a serious interest in him and Benny has never returned to the print shop except as a visitor; and today he probably has enough money made during the short time since he was technically "fired" to buy the plant.

Benny is not the only member of the Leiner family who is acquainted with the antics of the padded mitts, although, of course, he is the most prominent. Charlie, two years younger than Benny, is a boxer of more than ordinary ability and probably would get near the top if he was as enthusiastic about the sport as Benny.

In November, 1915, Charlie won the international amateur title in the 125 pounds class at the Panama Exposition held in San Francisco.

As Dundee apparently is minus the "kick" he is rated third among the Big Three. Dundee is staying at the top owing to his speed and cleverness, not winning one-tenth of his bouts by the K. O. route. White, whose correct name is Charles Anichewitz, owns a terrific left hook that puts many of his opponents down for the count, and he can be ranked along side of Leonard as a boxer who often calls upon the old punch to win for him.

White Can Have Match.

WHITE is one of the few good lightweights of the entire country that Leonard has not met. Two years ago Manager Gibson had the opportunity of pitting his youngster against the Chicago slugger, but Billy was entirely too fussy to take a chance on ruining the career of a promising lad by over-matching him and refused the bout. White can have the match, though, now, and according to Gibson the Chicagoan has been offered a big purse to meet the little New Yorker. Gibson is confident that Leonard now has the ability to defeat White, he being much stronger than two years ago, and also has gained the needed experience.

Leonard and Dundee have boxed four times, all no-decision affairs in which public opinion was divided as to who had the advantage. Their first meeting was on March 2, 1915, in New York and ten rounds. The remaining three bouts were boxed this year, two ten-round affairs in New York and a six-round contest in Philadelphia, the short bout being their final clash, being held on November 15. It was a great contest with both boys doing some spectacular work, but in a long bout there is hardly any doubt but what Leonard would be an easy winner as Dundee would lose some of his speed after the early rounds and he has not the "kick" to offset the heavy hitting powers of Leonard.

Leonard's first big jump toward the top occurred on December 17, last year, in New York, when he knocked out Joe Mandot, of New Orleans, in the seventh round of a contest scheduled to go ten. The Southerner was a prominent contender for lightweight honors at that time. The victory of Leonard by a knock-out resulted in his name being heralded to all parts of the country. The punch shown in that bout has now become an ordinary feat for him, as in nearly two dozen fights, against good boys he has walked out of the ring a victor by a K. O. in ten of them while in several others his opponent had a narrow escape.

Some of the Knockouts.

JIMMY MURPHY was put down for the count in the fifth round. Phil Bloom was sent to the eighth round and then was forced to succumb to Leonard's punching ability. Sammy Robideau was keeled over in the fifth round. Joe Welsh also suffered a K. O. in the fifth round. Eddie McAndrews was another one of Leonard's opponents that could not get past the fifth stanza. Shamus O'Brien reached the seventh round then was stretched on the mat for the count of ten. Frankie Canney was toppled over in the sixth round. Ever Hammer and Harvey "Fighting" Thorpe managed to get in the twelfth round before becoming unconscious from the Easterner's terrific wallop.

The boys besides Freddie Welsh and Johnny Dundee who have gone the scheduled distance against Leonard this year, are "Rocky" Kansas, ten rounds; Frankie Callahan, ten rounds; Joe Azevedo, ten rounds; Johnny Nelson and Johnny Thirman, six rounds; and Stanley Yankum, ten rounds. The two six-round contests were in Philadelphia and Leonard had his opponents in a bad way in the last round, but they managed to pull through. Against Kansas the little New Yorker missed getting credit for a knockout by the small margin of three seconds.

Benny's unmarked face, despite many fights.

chance that the little New Yorker had of dethroning the Englishman was to put him away, and as the Briton is recognized as one of the greatest defensive boxers the world ever developed, Leonard was unequal to the occasion of putting the champion down for the count, a feat which has never been accomplished.

Welsh has never been knocked out. Leonard probably came as close to turning the trick as any boxer ever did, as in their first engagement, held in Madison Square Garden, New York, on April 7 last, Benny had the champion in bad way in the seventh round, but he weathered his way through to the bell, and during the minute's rest recuperated enough to stick out the remaining three rounds. The newspaper decisions were almost unanimously in favor of Leonard, stating that the champion received a good trimming.

Wants Fight with Welsh.

LEONARD and his manager are hoping to be able to induce Welsh to agree to a decision bout or a contest of at least twenty rounds. Both Benny and Gibson are confident that if Welsh will step into the ring against him in a bout scheduled for twenty rounds that a decision will not be necessary. According to the little New Yorker there could only be one outcome in a long bout and that would be the mat for Welsh. The champion, while not old by any means, is far from being a youngster, being in the 30s, and he is not nearly as careful in regard to his mode of life as is Leonard. The Englishman is quite a sociable fellow.

In the meanwhile, Leonard is picking up a comfortable fortune by eliminating all other championship possibilities. Two years ago each boxing center had its own coming champion. The country was full of boys who were going to take the crown away from Welsh. During the last twelve months Leonard has taken all the buzz out of the majority of these would-be champions. As fast as he meets them just one more is eliminated. Today there are but two boys besides Leonard, who can be classed as material worthy of being champions, these contenders being Johnny Dundee, the clever Italian from New York, and Charlie White, the hard-hitting Hebrew from Chicago.



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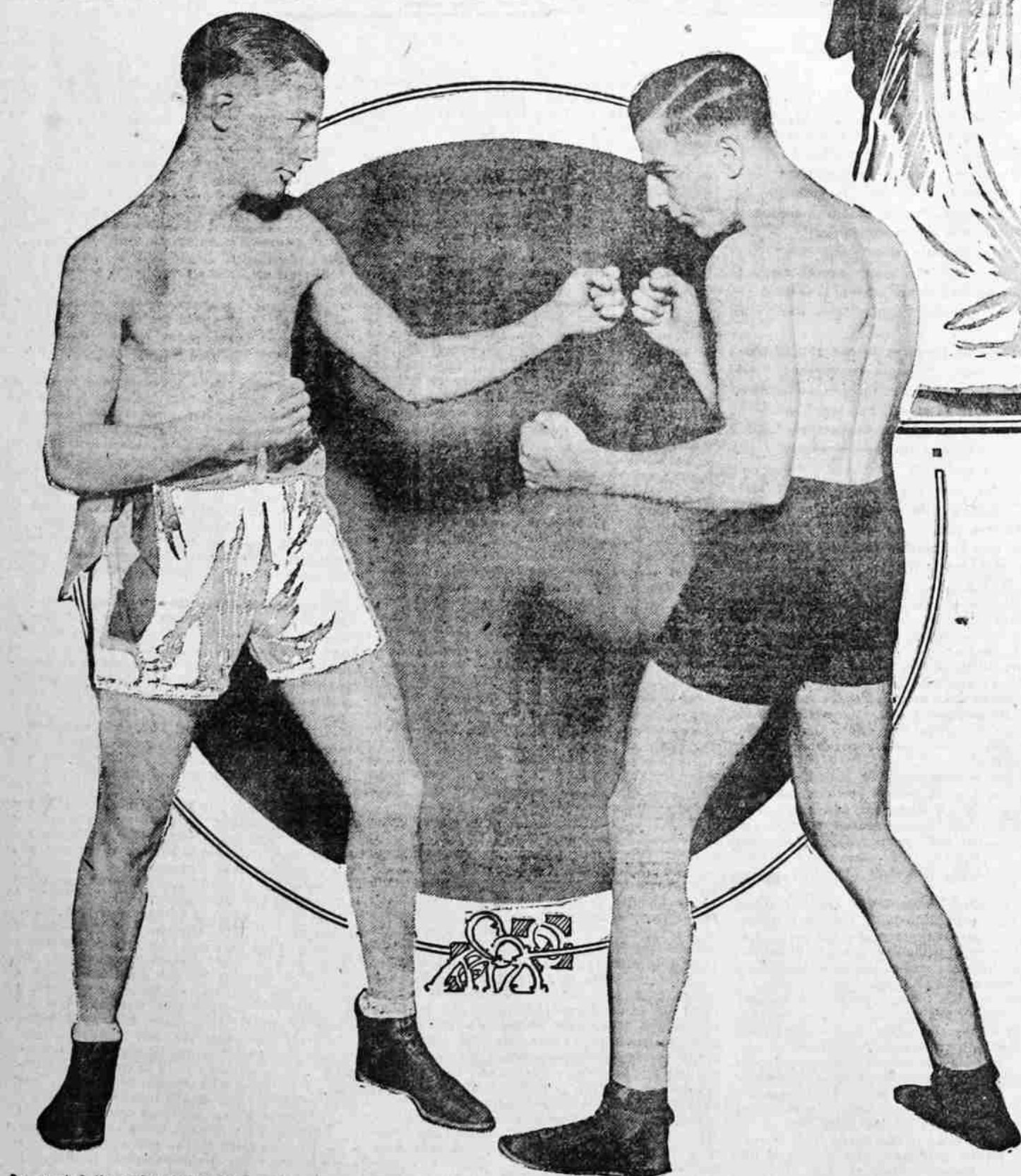
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On left, Benny feinting with left, his usual tactics when sparring for an opening



he carried the old "good-night" wallop in his fists for his biggest asset in scoring victories. These were what the veterans of the sport today would term "in the good old days," when Jim and Tim put up a great mill, with Tim winning on a right cross flush to the jaw after he himself had barely escaped taking the count in the earlier rounds.

The opportunity for the followers of Sullivan, Dempsey, Fitzsimmons, McAuliffe, McGovern and any number of former prizes to again have the same old thrill take command of their mental condition is once more a thing of reality. Instead of uncertainty, and New York City, lower East Side, gains the noteworthy distinction

Leonard has been engaged at boxing as a profession since January, 1912, but it has only been in the last two years that he has jumped into prominence. He started his career in the roped arena as a featherweight, but soon became a little too heavy for the 125-pound class and then began going after the bigger boys, and it is in the lightweight division that Benny has made his reputation.

The ability, plus the capable management of Billy Gibson, who is also the manager of the Fairmount Athletic Club, located in Benny's home neighborhood, has the little New Yorker within grasp of the lightweight championship, and about all that is now needed to acquire the